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SUGGESTIONS TO LEADERS OF CLASSES IN THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY GEORGIA L. CHAMBERLIN

The passages which are under consideration this month are replete with suggestions for discussion and practical application to modern situations. Wherever it seems advisable, therefore, it is hoped that the leader will throw aside the programs suggested and substitute for them such practical plans as seem to him better. It would be well to present at one of the meetings, however, a map study which would give a clear idea of the social and political aspects of the world-changes that were taking place at the time when the speeches to be considered were uttered. There is always significance in world-changes, and in the present conflict of nations we are particularly interested in themes of this sort. Programs might be as follows:

PROGRAM I

1. Babylon immediately prior to the coming of Cyrus.
 2. Changes in the religious views of Israel which might have been expected as a result of long absence from Palestine and partial absorption in the Babylonian life.
 3. The necessity for the revival of the hope of a return to Palestine if the nation was to survive; the method of the prophet who undertook to rouse that hope.
 4. Reading: The speeches concerning the idol gods of Babylon.
- Discussion:* Does the present European war have in it any suggestion as to the dependence of God upon human co-operation in the preservation of nations?

PROGRAM II

1. The conquests and policies of Cyrus the Great.
 2. The religious teaching concerning Israel contained in the "Servant of Jehovah" passages.
 3. The specific teaching of the greatest of these passages, 52:13—53:12, followed by the reading of the passage.
 4. Vicarious suffering; its meaning, the extent of its presence in the life of nature and humanity.
- Discussion:* To whom are the greatest satisfactions of vicarious suffering, to him who suffers or to him who is redeemed by the suffering?

REFERENCE READING

In addition to the books suggested in the study of last month consult Skinner's commentary on Isaiah 40-66, in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, McFadyen's in *The Bible for Home and School*, and especially Vol. II on Isaiah in the *Expositor's Bible*, by George Adam Smith. For more detailed information concerning Cyrus consult the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the best ancient histories.